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INDIAN ART

Art is a major factor in the cultural heritage of India. It presents a visual proof of the creative activity, aesthetic achievement and emotional outlook of the Indian people. The history of this art opens in the third millennium B.C., in the prosperous fortified towns of the Indus Valley enjoying a rich civilization, of which the remains at Mohenjo-daro in Sind and Harappa in the Punjab have yielded a number of beautiful objects of domestic and religious use reflecting the refined taste of their authors. Between this brilliant chapter of the proto-historic art of India and the historical epoch of the Mauryan period (4th-3rd century B.C.) a big gap intervenes awaiting to be filled by the actual remains of material life.

In the 3rd century B.C. the monolithic columns put up at the behest of Emperor Asoka, with their wonderful capitals and mirror-like polish, bear testimony to the achievements of the Mauryan art. The Sarnath Lion Capital presents a rare combination of mastery of technique, vigour of expression and developed symbolism. The life-size animal figures, like the Rampurva Bull, which once surmounted the tall and slender pillars have lost none of their original impressiveness. Besides the art produced under court direction, there also flourished a religious art based on the worship of a widespread cult of tutelary deities called Yakshas and Yakshis as seen in the Yaksha figures of Parkham (Mathura) and Patna. The most outstanding example is the figure of the female whisk-bearer, the Yakshi found at Didarganj near Patna with bright Mauryan polish, assignable to the last quarter of the 3rd century B.C.

This popular art entered a phase of unprecedented activity in the 2nd century B.C., when under the direct influence of Buddhism, a synthesis between the higher and lower forms of religious beliefs suitable to the Indian genius resulted in the monumental stupas of Bharhut and Sanchi. The numerous bas-reliefs on their gateways and railings present a rich documentation of early Indian religious life and culture. The beautiful marble reliefs of the stupas of Amaravati and Nagarjunikonda, although later, continue the same tradition.

At the turn of the century, a vital and prolific school of Indian sculpture sprang up at Mathura, distinguished by a remarkable series of images of the Buddha and of several Jaina patriarchs. The most elegant creations of this school are the numerous female figures carved on railing uprights, portraying scenes of happy feminine life in the company of birds, flowers, trees and flowing streams. The beauty of Mathura sculpture consists in exquisite form, directness of expression and simplicity of ornamentation.

The Gupta period (4th-5th century A.D.) is the Golden Age of Indian art. In sculpture and painting, some of the best creations worthy of a place in world culture were produced at this time. Art was being cultivated on a national scale both in north and south India. The rise of the Brahmanical temple was a new architectural experiment, with great potentiality for the growth of sculpture, statuary and decorative forms. A universal consciousness of beauty, apparent even in minor figurines of clay and moulded bricks with charming designs, was the hall-mark of this age. Gupta sculpture presents a synthesis of beautiful form and deep spiritual expression. The great Buddha figures represent some of the finest religious sculptures ever produced, and are eloquent symbols of the thought of an age rich in deep religious experience.

The refined and elegant style of Gupta sculpture came to a close in about the 7th century. It was transmuted into more powerful and monumental medieval sculpture. As in the domain of the mind Śāṅkarāchārya proclaimed the divine majesty of the human spirit, so in the domain of art sculpture and architecture assumed monumental form. The monuments of Ellora and Elephanta executed in the 8th century A.D. started a cycle which found its culmination in the temples of Khajuraho, Abu and Bhuvaneshvar. The sculptures at the last place are supremely beautiful, both in form and spiritual repose. The finely chiselled bodies are cast in forms of superlative loveliness, and the faces reveal a mood of intense religious and emotional feeling. Perhaps at no other period, and in no other centre, in the history of Indian art, did sculpture attain such mastery over technique and poise of form and feeling. The Sun temple at Konarak shows some of the finest animal sculpture executed in India. In the south, remarkable sculpture integrated to architectural forms was produced during the Pallava period at Mamallapuram (7th century A.D.), the monolithic temples and rock-cut reliefs illustrating the flower of Dravidian figure sculpture.

In south India during the Chola period, the art of casting images in metal was cultivated with great vigour, resulting in a number of marvellous specimens like the figure of Natarāja Śiva engaged in the cosmic dance, Kṛishṇa in a dance pose with his flute, and Śiva seated with Umā. The bronze dancing girl from Mohenjo-daro seems to be the remote ancestor of these Indian cast images, although subsequent links in the chain are not all preserved.

The fresco paintings at Ajanta show the Indian pictorial art in its epic vastness and constitute a veritable document of cultural saga. From the 8th century onwards, the art of mural paintings had its rival in miniature paintings, and the art of illustrated manuscripts was intensely cultivated in the Pāla school in eastern India. With Bengal and Bihar falling a prey to Muslim invasions, the art of miniature book painting found a congenial centre in Western India, where between the 12th and 16th century a series of charming manuscripts abounding in Jain religious miniatures have been found. Painting had a more vigorous revival in north India after the 16th century. Three great schools can be clearly distinguished: (1) the Mughal school inspired by Akbar rising in the second half of the 16th century and reaching its zenith during the reigns of Jahangir and Shahjahan in the 17th century; (2) the Rajasthani school cultivated at the various Hindu courts during the 17th and 18th centuries and marked by a rich harmony of warm colours and passionate feeling, specially in the pictorial representation of the musical melodies (Rāgas and Rāgiṇīs); and (3) the Pahari school cultivated in the courts of the sub-Himalayan States from Chamba to Tehri Garhwal during the 17th and 18th centuries with its subjects centring round the romantic love of Rādhā and Kṛishṇa. This school has produced some of the most lyrical and beautiful miniature paintings of India.

The beautiful decorative features of Mughal paintings were no less obvious in the art fabrics manufactured at numerous places like Delhi, Lahore, Agra, Banaras, Dacca, Murshidabad, Chanderi, Ahmadabad, and Tanjore. Both for their brilliant colour schemes and richness of decorative designs, the art textiles of India held their own up to the 18th century, after which an era of planned decadence almost wiped out this most precious heritage of the country.

भारतीय कलाप्रदर्शनी

चित्र-सूची

- (१) अजोक्तकालीन वृषभाङ्कित स्तम्भशाली। रामपुरवा, बिहार। मोर्चे, तृतीय शती ई० पूर्व।
- (२) चामरघ्राहिणी यक्षी। दीदारगंज, पटना। मोर्चे, लगभग २०० ई० पूर्व।
- (३) यक्षी, चुलकोका देवता, भगहन स्तूप का वेदिका-स्तम्भ। गुण, द्वितीय शती ई० पूर्व।
- (४) वेदिका-स्तम्भ पर निर्जल-स्नान करने हुई स्त्री मूर्ति। मथुरा। कुषाण, द्वितीय शती ई०।
- (५) मथुरा का दृश्य। मथुरा। कुषाण, द्वितीय शती ई०।
- (६) शुक-कोड़ा करने हुई स्त्री। मथुरा में प्राप्त वेदिका-स्तम्भ। कुषाण, द्वितीय शती ई०।
- (७) सुन्दर प्रभा-मंडल में अलंकृत बुद्धमूर्ति। मथुरा। पाँचवीं शती ई०।
- (८) मथुरा पृष्ठ पर कार्तिकेय। गुप्त, छठी शती ई०। (भारत कलाभवन, काशी)
- (९) अलकावली में सुमार्गभर पार्वती-मन्त्रक। अहिकुण्ड, बरेली। मिट्टी की मूर्ति। पाँचवीं शती ई०।
- (१०) एक लिंग हुए सुन्दर युवक। मिट्टी की मूर्ति। मोगुल खास (मिथ) के स्तूप में। लगभग ५०० ई०।
- (११) शुक-कोड़ा करने हुई स्त्री। शारंगस्तम्भ। राजमहल, बिहार। गुप्त, छठी शती ई०।
- (१२) मनीलमणि मुद्रा में स्त्री मूर्ति। गुप्त कला की श्रेष्ठ कृति। छठी-सातवीं शती ई०।
- (१३) वज्रपाणि बोधिमन्त्र। ललितगिरि, उड़ीसा। मध्यकालीन, आठवीं शती ई०।
- (१४) बन्धे को हटाने करने हुई माँ। भुवनेश्वर, उड़ीसा। मध्यकालीन, ग्यारहवीं शती ई०।
- (१५) लिखती हुई स्त्री। भुवनेश्वर, उड़ीसा। मध्यकालीन, ग्यारहवीं शती ई०।
- (१६) दर्पण में दर्शाते करने हुई स्त्री। भुवनेश्वर, उड़ीसा। मध्यकालीन, ग्यारहवीं शती ई०।
- (१७) दावरी। मैसूर। होयसल, बारहवीं शती ई०।
- (१८) मरुत्तकी की मर्मर-मूर्ति। बीकानेर। बारहवीं-पंद्रहवीं शती ई०।
- (१९) नटराज शिव की नाच करने हुई काम्य-मूर्ति। तमोर, मदरास। तेरहवीं शती ई०।
- (२०) बोल महादेवी। काम्य-मूर्ति। चिगलपट, मदरास। तेरहवीं शती ई०। (गीतम मागभाई संघट्ट, ब्रह्मदादाद)
- (२१) छपाई और कलमदारी के काम की रेखाएँ गाड़ी। तमोर, मदरास। तेरहवीं शती ई०।
- (२२) संगीत के आवाज में नृत्य करने हुए दमरवी का चित्र। मृग-प्रभावाचिन राजस्थानी शैली। ब्रह्मवार काल, पन्द्रहवीं शती ई०।
- (२३) विप्रलब्धा नायिका (नायक के वचन-भंग करने पर दुःख विभ्रंशनी हुई)। पहाड़ी चित्र, अठारहवीं शती ई०। (प्रिय और केवल मृदुचित्र, बम्बई)
- (२४) नायिका का वन-बिहार। पहाड़ी चित्र, बमोली, अठारहवीं शती ई०। (श्री नाट्यालय चयनमान वेहता के संग्रह में)



Asokan Bull Capital. Polished sandstone.
Rampurva, Bihar, Mauryan, 3rd century
B.C. Ht. 202.5 cm.



Female chauri-bearer, probably a Yakshi. Didarganj, Patna.
Polished sandstone. Mauryan, c. 200 B.C. Ht. 160 cm.



**Yakshi Chulakoka from stupa-railing at Bharhut,
Central India. Sandstone. Sunga, 2nd century
B.C. Ht. 21.4 cm.**



Woman bathing under waterfall: railing-pillar.
Kankali Tila, Mathura. Red Sandstone.
Kushana, 2nd century A.D. Ht. 73 cm.



Pedestal for a bowl depicting a Bacchanalian Scene. Red Sandstone. Mathura. Kushana, 2nd century A.D. Ht. 92 cm.



Woman sporting with parrot and carrying
its cage, railing-pillar, Bhutesvara,
Mathura, Red sandstone, Kushana,
2nd century A.D. Ht. 129 cm.



Standing Buddha with elaborate lotus-design halo. Red Sandstone.
Mathura. Gupta, 5th century A.D. Ht. 217 cm.



Karttikeya, God of War, seated on peacock. United Provinces. Sandstone. Gupta, 6th century A.D.
Ht. 50.5 cm.



Head of Parvati with crescent, third eye and spiral locks of hair. Ahichchhatra, Bareilly district. Terracotta. 5th century A.D. Ht. 1 1/2 cm.



Young worshipper. Terracotta from the Stupa of Mirpur-khas.
Sind. Gupta, about 500 A.D. Ht. 75 cm.



Woman sporting with a parrot : on door jamb. Rajmahal, Bihar. Sandstone. Gupta, 6th century A.D. Ht. 81.5 cm.



Skirted female figure standing in a graceful pose. An excellent specimen of Late Gupta workmanship. Sandstone 6th-7th century A.D. Ht. 89 cm.



HOLI—Gopis at Holi Festival Dressing Krishna in Female Garments.
Kangra Kalam. 1780-1800 A.D. Kallianji Curumsey Damjee Collection, Bombay. Size $11\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{4}$ ins.



Bodhisattva Vajrapani. — Basaltic group. — La'itragin, Orissa.
Medieval, 8th century A.D. Ht. 114 cm.



Mother tondling child. Bhuvanesvara, Orissa. Sandstone. Medieval, 11th century A.D. Ht. 92 cm.



Woman writing with a stylus. Bhubanesvara, Orissa. Sandstone. Medieval, 11th century A.D. Ht. 69 cm.



Woman with mirror. Bhuvanesvara, Orissa. Sandstone. Medieval, 11th century A.D. Ht. 955 cm.



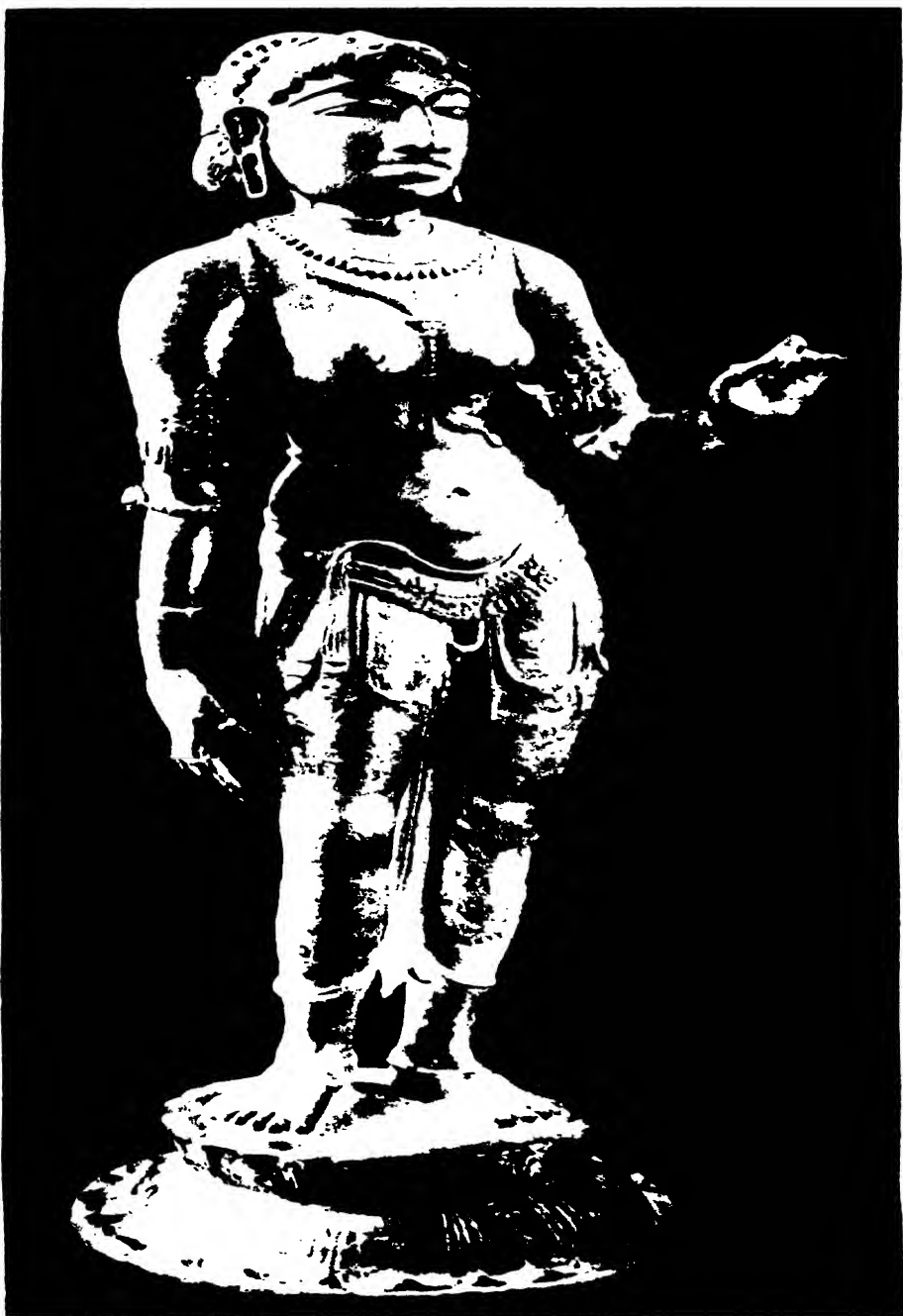
Huntress in wild dress examining an arrow. Mysore. Basalt. Hoysala, 12th century. Ht. 130 cm.



SARASWATI, Goddess of Wisdom and Learning, holding veena, lotus, manuscript, and waterpot in the four hands, Jun., Bikaner.
Marble. 12th-13th century A.D. Ht. 120 cm.



Siva as Nataraja performing the Tandava dance. Tanjore district, Madras. Bronze. 10th century A. D.
Ht. 115 cm



Chola queen. Chingleput district, Madras. Bronze.
13th century A.D. Ht. 53.5 cm. (Lent by
Gautam Sarabhai, Ahmedabad).



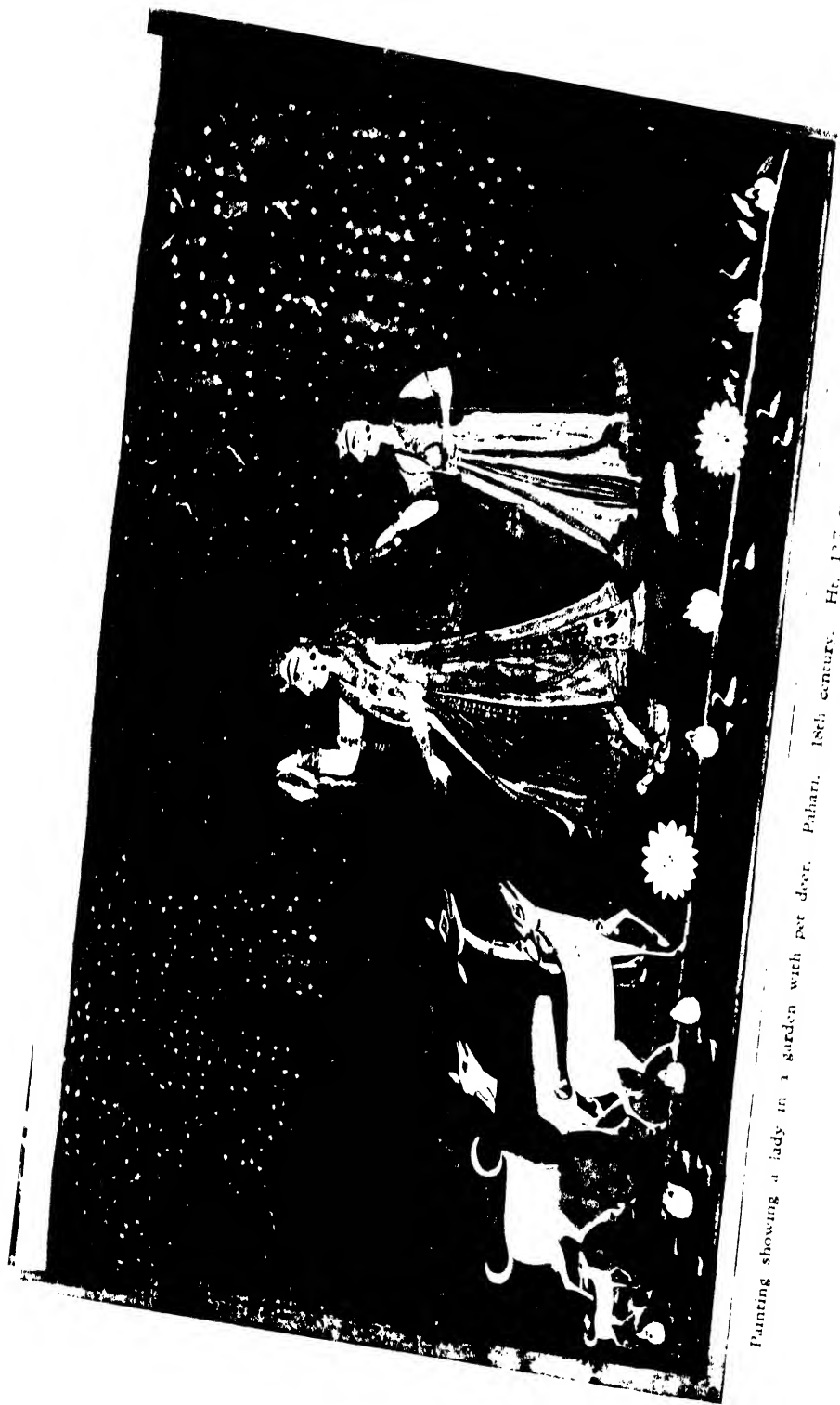
Sari with combination of kalamdar-work and block-printing. Tanjore, Madras. Late 17th century A.D.



Painting showing prince and princess dancing to the accompaniment of music. Mixed Rajput-Mughal style. Jahangir period. Early 17th Century A.D. Ht. 22.4 cm.



Painting of a woman in a garden, with a large tree and a small figure in the branches. (Reproduced from the 18th-century A.D. manuscript, *Manuscript of the 18th-century A.D. manuscript*).



Painting showing a lady in a garden with pet deer. Pahari, 18th century. Ht. 12.7 cm. (Lent by Mr. N. C. Melita)

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